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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 2351
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SUBJECT: THAI TO LIFT MARTIAL LAW IN EARLY DECEMBER

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Council for National Security (CNS) Chairman and Army Commander Sonthi Boonyaratglin confirmed in a November 9 phone conversation with the Ambassador that the RTG would lift martial law in conjunction with the King's birthday celebrations. (Note: The King's birthday is on December 5; the celebrations proceed for several days. End Note.) The Ambassador said he would convey the news to Washington.

¶2. (C) Comment: We are relieved to hear that the CNS is determined to move in early December. While we believe current conditions do not warrant martial law, some conservatives likely hoped to retain emergency powers for an indefinite period. Having repeatedly urged top RTG officials to lift martial law, we do not believe we can successfully lobby the Thais to take this step sooner.

¶3. (C) Comment (continued): Some RTG officials have stated that deposed PM Thaksin Shinawatra should not return to Thailand prior to the rescission of martial law, so this step will prompt further speculation about Thaksin's next move. However, we believe the RTG will signal Thaksin that he should remain abroad for the time being.
BOYCE